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# Singing for Beginners FOREWORD



Welcome! This is a free singing book for you to use to learn to sing. The content of this singing lesson book is based upon my experience as a music teacher. This book also contains basic music theory principles to help singers understand the music that they are singing.

The singing exercises are critical to master and all the instructions for the successful completion of exercises are contained this book as well as from your singing teacher. Practice is a most essential part of learning any instrument; in this case your instrument is your voice. That is why I have included practice charts which can be filled in as to how much practice was accomplished within the week between lessons.

Always be careful not to strain your voice when trying to do the songs and exercises; singing should be a natural and an enjoyable experience.

In conclusion, I hope that you will enjoy learning music and how to sing properly.

Good Luck!

Camilla Holmes

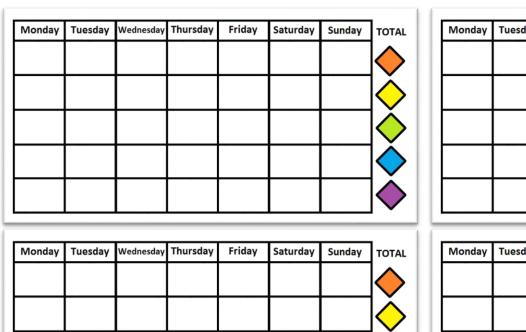


#### Why must I practice?

Just as an athlete needs to keep fit, we must keep our vocal cords strong and flexible to sing well.

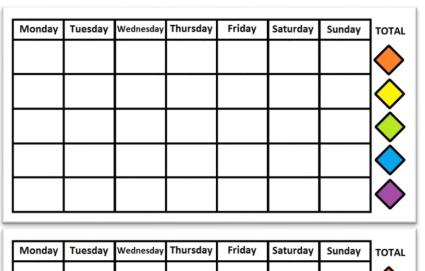
#### How do I practice?

- Warm up your voice for 5 15 minutes so that your voice is in the "right place" for singing.
- When you practice the song you are working on, don't just sing it over and over again from start to finish every time. *Practice the problem areas more than the rest of the song*. You should break your practice down into small sections:
  - First, you need to get the **melody** and your **pitch** right.
  - Second, you need to make sure your **vocal technique** is correct.
  - Third, add emotion and depth to your song in the style you sing it.
- Make time for practice. There is always time for practice if you manage your time well. Set a time and place you practice every day. For example, it could be after lunch, after homework is done, or before supper every day. Routine is important.
- The next 3 pages consist of practice charts. It is important to record how much you practice because it helps you to practice more. Your teacher/parent/friend should check your chart.



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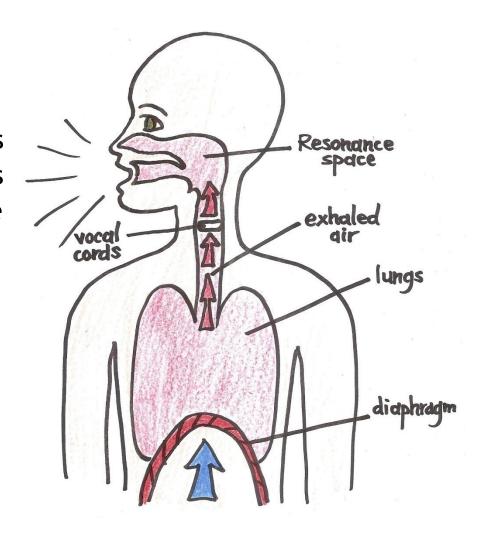
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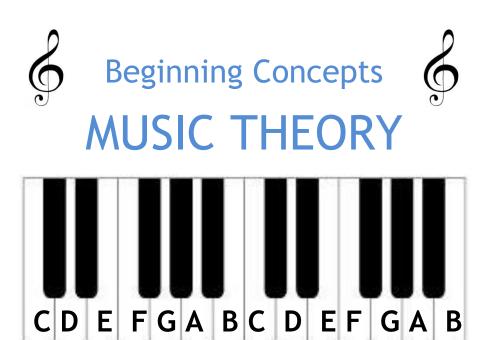
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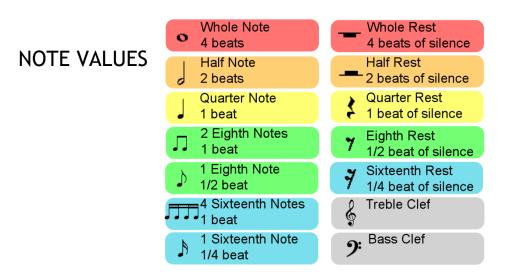
# HOW YOUR VOICE WORKS

When you sing or speak, your diaphragm pushes upwards on your lungs, causing air to be expelled from your lungs. This air then passes through your vocal cords and causes the vocal cords to **vibrate** and make sound waves. These sound waves resonate in your nasal and oral cavity which makes the sound of your voice. This is why using your diaphragm while singing is so important!

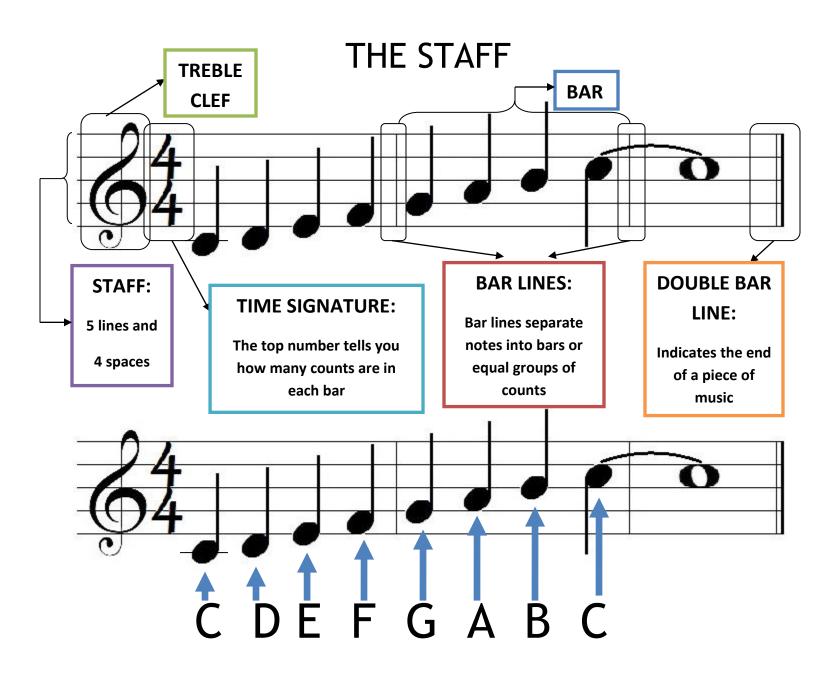




Music uses the first 7 letters of the alphabet: A, B, C, D, E, F, G. Here are they are on the piano.



**REST VALUES & CLEFS** 



# **MUSICAL TERMS**

#### Dynamics (Volume)

pp - pianissimo (very soft)

p - piano (soft)

mp - mezzo piano (medium soft)

mf - mezzo forte (medium loud)

f - forte (loud)

ff - fortissimo (very loud)

# Articulation (Technique) legato accent staccato

#### Tempo (Speed)

Largo - very slow 40-60 bpm

Larghetto - very slow, but faster than largo 60-66 bpm

Adagio - slow ("at ease") 66-76 bpm

Andante - moderate, walking pace 76-108 bpm

*Moderato* - moderate pace 108-120 bpm

Allegro - fast, lively 120-168 bpm

Presto - very fast 168-200 bpm

Prestissimo - extremely fast, as quickly as possible 200-208bpm



# **Beginning Concepts**

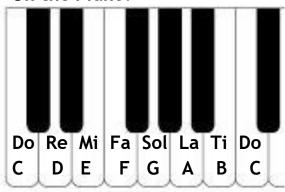


# SOLFEGE

- Solfège helps you to sight-sing or learn music without hearing the tune played first.
- It helps you increase **sight-singing** skills by helping you see **patterns** in music.
- Solfège also improves your ability to sing **intervals** (the space between notes), which improves your overall **pitch**.
- With solfège you learn songs quickly and well.

<u>C Major Scale:</u> C, D, E, F, G, A, B, C. Solfège: Do, Re, Mi, Fa, Sol, La, Ti, Do

#### On the Piano:



#### In Written Music:





- To sing well, you need to take care of your voice as well as your body.
- To get the most from your voice, your body needs to be **healthy**. This means you need to **eat** healthily, have enough rest and maintain a daily exercise program for your voice and body.
- Here are some points to remember to care for your voice:
  - 1. **POSTURE**: You need to have correct posture for proper breathing and clear thinking. Your head, chest and pelvis should be supported by your spine so that they all align themselves one under the other.
  - 2. **FATIGUE & STRESS**: Emotional stress or physical fatigue affects the performance of your voice because your neuromuscular system cannot function properly.

#### 3. BAD HABITS:

- a. Alcohol and drugs disrupt your neuromuscular system, decreasing your ability to sing.
- b. Smoking dries out the mucous lining in larynx making singing difficult.
- c. **Eating before singing** makes your body sluggish and creates excess mucous in your vocal cords, interfering with singing.
- d. Excessive coughing, sneezing, shouting or forcing of air through your larynx when singing or clearing your throat can damage your vocal cords.
- e. **Imitating other singers** is unwise as it forces your voice to sound like a voice that is different level of singing. You should never force your voice to do anything.



# **Getting Ready to Sing**



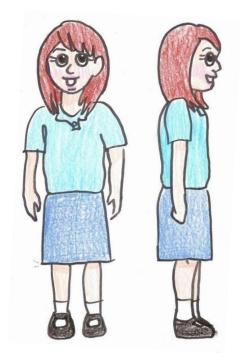
# **CHECKLIST**

#### 1. Stretches

- ✓ Stretch up with your arms
- ✓ Then relax your upper body like a
- ✓ Yawn like a cat
- ✓ Lift your shoulders up to your ears



ragdoll



#### 2. Posture

- ✓ Your chest must be comfortably high
- ✓ Never slouch your back must be quite straight
- ✓ Never tilt your chin up or down when singing
- ✓ Never fiddle with your hands
- ✓ Stand still and don't sway unnecessarily
- ✓ Distribute your weight evenly on both your feet

#### 3. Positive Attitude

- ✓ Remember to have a positive attitude while you are singing
- ✓ Always try to improve
- ✓ And most importantly...have fun!





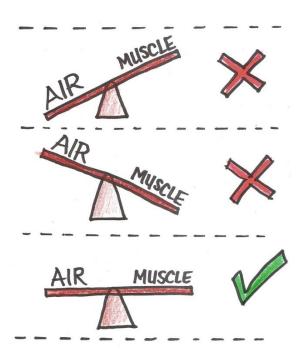
# **Getting Ready to Sing**



# **BREATHING**

#### Things to Remember:

- Correct posture: chest must be comfortably high
- Do not take shallow breaths
- Do not raise your chest or shoulders when breathing in
- Do not collapse chest when breathing out
- Do not use too much air to sing using less air is better than too much
- Breathing is a relaxed process
- There must be a balance between how much air you use to sing and how much muscle you use in your larynx (voice box)



#### Breathing Exercise

- Place your hand on your stomach and the other on your waist and breathe in for 10 counts. Breathe out for 15 counts using a "Sss" sound, almost like a bicycle tire is deflating.
- **Never gasp in air** when breathing in. You must ensure your breathing technique is **smooth**.
- This breathing exercise can be done up to 10 times in a row. Only do as many times as you are able.

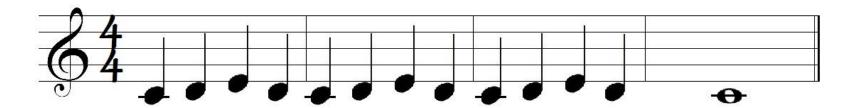




- Just as an athlete needs to keep their body fit with regular exercise, a singer must keep their voice **strong and flexible** with **vocal exercises**
- Always begin your singing with warm-up exercises for at least 15 minutes
- Remember that if any exercise is overdone, you can damage your voice
- If you strain or push your voice, you are not doing the exercise properly
- Start the exercises gently
- You will do the exercises much better if you are relaxed don't tense up your jaw or any part of your face or body
- Use a nice open oval-shaped mouth (not a flat, wide mouth)
- Try not to move your mouth or jaw too much as you change syllables
- Your teacher will play each exercise going higher or going lower

In the following exercises, there are different instructions for each exercise. You will be asked to do any of the following: bubble lips, vowels, solfège and tongue trills. The vowels are pronounced Ah, Eh, Ee, Oh, Oo. Your teacher will show you how. The exercises will be played going higher (ascending) or going lower (descending) at your teacher's discretion.

#### **EXERCISE 1**



- 1. Bubble lips
- 2. Do re mi re, etc.
- 3. Tongue Trills
- 4. Vowels Ah, Eh, Ee, Oh, Oo

TIP! When you do bubble lips or tongue trills, your face muscles have to be completely relaxed to do them. They take some practice to get right.

#### 5-note Scale



- 1. Bubble lips
- 2. Do Re Mi Fa Sol Fa Mi Re Do
- 3. Oh, Ah, Ay, Ah, Oh

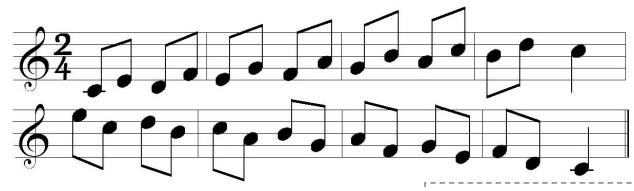
- 4. Ee, Ah, Oo, Ah, Ee
- 5. Ah, Ee, Oo, Ee, Ah
- 6. Tongue trills

#### **EXERCISE 3**

#### C Major Scale



- 1. Bubble lips
- 2. Do, re, mi, fa, sol, la, ti, do, ti, la, sol, fa, mi, re, do



- 1. "Bumble Bee"
- 2. Vowels, like 'Oh', 'Oo', 'Ah', etc.
- 3. 'Nay' (use a narrow oval mouth shape)

TIP! Keep your mouth narrow and use your diaphragm to project your voice.



- 1. Bubble lips
- 2. Ah, Eh, Ee, Oh, Oo
- 3. Tongue trills



An arpeggio is a nice way to warm up your voice because it covers a large range of notes. An arpeggio is a pattern created by the 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> notes of any scale.

#### **EXERCISE 6**



- 1. Bubble lips
- 2. Do mi sol do sol mi do
- 3. Tongue trills

TIP! When you anticipate high notes, bend forward slightly with your back straight and return to standing position afterwards. This tricks yourself into thinking you're singing a low note.



- 1. Bubble lips
- 2. 'Nay' (use a narrow oval mouth shape)
- 3. Do mi sol do, do, do sol mi do

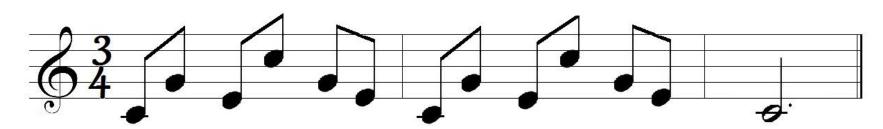


- 1. Bubble lips
- 2. Vowels



- 1. Bubble lips
- 2. Tongue Trills
- 3. 'Nay' (use a narrow oval mouth shape)
- 4. Vowels

- 5. "Wee"
- 6. "Gee" (do not go as high or as low with this one)



- 1. Bubble lips
- 2. Tongue Trills
- 3. "Mum"
- 4. Vowels



- 1. "Wee"
- 2. "Gee" (do not go as high or as low with this one)



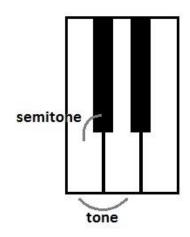
**Pitch** is the word we use when we talk about **how high or how low** you sing a note. If you sing a high note, we say that you are singing a **high-pitched note**. If you sing a low note, we say that you are singing a **low-pitched note**.

We also talk about singing correct pitch. You know when a pitch is false when it is a little too flat or too sharp. It will sound bad because the note is not sung in true pitch.

Correct pitch is like **shooting an arrow at a target**. If you get a **bull's eye**, your pitch is **true** and correct. If you **miss** and land your arrow **above the target**, you are **a little too sharp**. If you land your arrow **below the target**, you are **a little too flat**. Like shooting arrows at a target, getting bulls eyes or singing the correct pitch takes **a lot of practice**.

One way to improve your pitch is learning to sing **tones and semitones** correctly. So what are tones and semitones?

A **tone** is one full step from one note to the next one, which means there must be a note in between. A **semitone** is half of a tone and is the note nearest to the reference note. Basically, a tone is equal to two semitones. We use a pattern of tones and semitones to create a traditional scale. Here is the pattern: **Tone**, **tone**, **semitone**, **tone**, **tone**, **tone**, **and semitone**.



Let's practice singing tones and semitones. With these exercises, you may choose which vowels or sounds to sing these with.

#### **EXERCISE 12**

TONES (C,D,E)



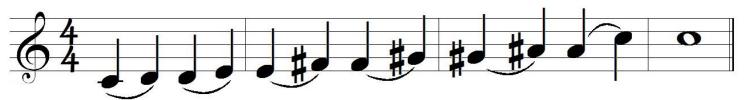
#### **EXERCISE 13**

TONES (F,G,A)



#### **EXERCISE 14**

TONES (middle C to high C)



#### SEMITONES (chromatic scale from middle C to high C)

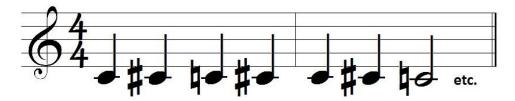


#### **EAR TEST:**

Your teacher will play a few random notes and you must identify each as either: a tone or semitone, and where they go: up or down.

#### **EXERCISE 16**

SEMITONES (middle C to high C)



#### **EXERCISE 17**

SEMITONES (middle C to high C)



1. Maa, May, Mee, Moh, Moo\_\_\_\_



# Improving Your Pitch INTERVALS



An Interval is the distance between any two notes. Learning intervals helps us to sight sing. Here are the intervals we will learn about:

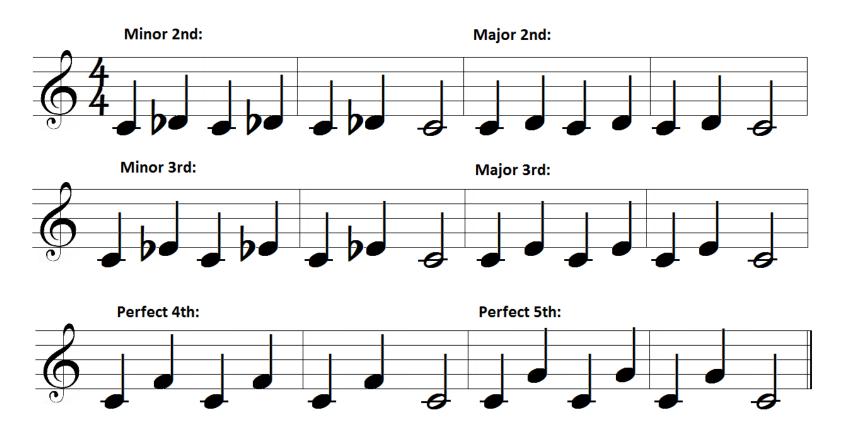
- Unison
- Minor 2<sup>nd</sup>
- Major 2<sup>nd</sup>
- Minor 3<sup>rd</sup>

- Major 3<sup>rd</sup>
- Perfect 4<sup>th</sup>
- Perfect 5<sup>th</sup>

Your teacher will demonstrate these on the piano. A fun way to memorise the sound of each interval is to think of a song that begins with that particular interval:

- Unison Au Claire De La Lune
- Minor 2<sup>nd</sup> Theme from Jaws
- Major 2<sup>nd</sup> Happy Birthday
- Minor 3<sup>rd</sup> Greensleeves
- Major 3<sup>rd</sup> While Shepherds Watched
- Perfect 4<sup>th</sup> Here Comes the Bride
- Perfect 5<sup>th</sup> Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star

If you are not familiar with some of these songs, try think up other songs you know that begin with these intervals.



Ear Test: Your teacher will play a few random intervals. Try to work out which one is played each time.



# Improving your Pitch



# SIGHT SINGING

- So far we have learned about solfege, tones & semitones and intervals.
- Sight Singing is using all of these skills to work out the tune of a song. It takes a lot of practice and helps you develop an ear for singing the correct pitch.
- Your teacher will help you through the following sight singing exercises.
- Sing the exercises using any vowels or appropriate syllables you feel comfortable.

your
solfeggio
knowledge
to sight sing
by finding
middle C or
'Do' and
working up
the scale to
find the
pitch of each
note.

#### **EXERCISE 19**







#### **EXERCISE 22**



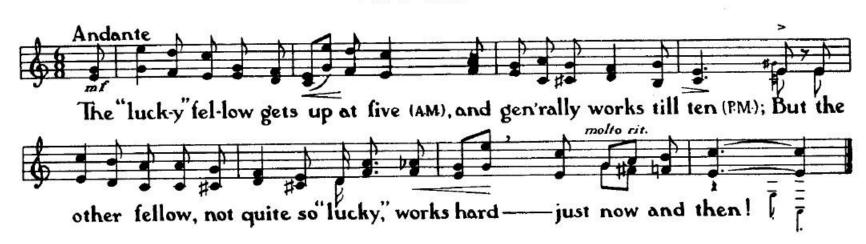
TIP! Sight Singing
exercises will also help
your rhythm. You need to
figure out the correct
rhythm to sight sing
properly. We do this by
clapping and counting the
notes.

TIP! The dot next to a note means that you must add on half of the note's value to the original value. For example, a dotted quarter note must get 1 and a half counts and a dotted half note must get 3 counts.



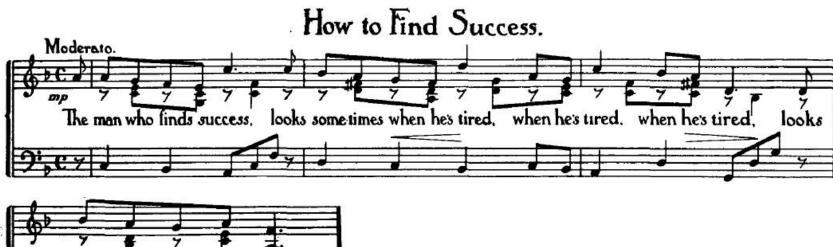
- The following half-minute songs may be sung as an attention-getter, for warming up, or to create variety in lessons or practice sessions.
- The words of each song are some words of advice that are helpful in life. Happy singing!

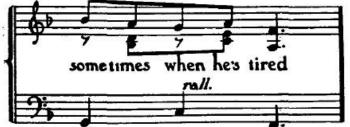
#### Now and Then.



#### To Understand.



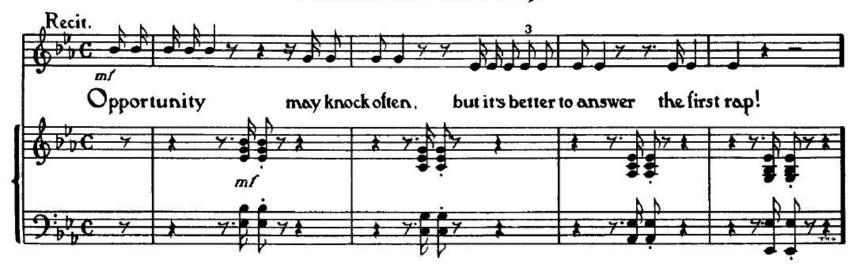




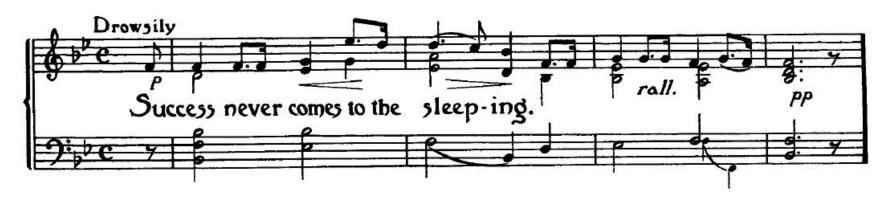
#### The Pleasure of Giving



# Answer the First Rap.



## Keep Awake.



# Doan' Yo' Lis'n.



#### Making the Best of It.



## First Ask Yourself.





#### What to do when you are preparing for a performance:

- 1. Prepare a song that suits you. Make sure the song style and range suits your voice.
- 2. Master your song. Make sure your pitch, rhythm and timing are correct.
- 3. Watch or listen to other singers perform your song. The internet and YouTube are such a rich resource of videos that we have at our fingertips. Listen to how other singers sing certain parts of your song you might struggle with or how they sing parts of the song differently. Watch what they do on stage while they sing.
- 4. On the day of the performance, **keep your voice in good condition by doing warm-up exercises** a couple of times throughout the day.
- 5. **Dress the part.** If you are singing a country-style song, dress up like a country singer. If you are singing classical style, dress up like a classical singer. Dress your best because presentation is important!

#### 5 Tips for Performing on stage:

- 1. Have a contagious and confident energy: even if you feel nervous, pretend that you are confident so that you "fake it until you make it". Remember that if you look nervous, the audience will also feel nervous. And if you are happy and energetic, the audience will be happy and energized as you perform.
- 2. **Eye Focus:** If you are looking in a dozen different directions while performing and you don't try to make eye contact with the general audience, you will look awkward and distracted. You need to make a connection with your audience. You don't need to look into people's eyes but you do need to look at your audience, even if it's a couple of people's foreheads.
- 3. The way you walk on stage: Know where you're walking to and then stop. Don't wander around the stage as you perform.

- 4. **Posture and body-language:** Let your shoulders fall back and come apart for good posture. Use body language in a way that conveys your confidence and the message of your song.
- 5. **Gestures:** Don't have "elbow glue". Move your elbows away from your body and use bigger, grander gestures.

#### Managing Nerves:

Be Prepared! The more prepared you are with your song, the less nervous you will feel.

Remember that the audience wants you to succeed. They don't want to see you nervous but they want you to excel.

They are on your side.

Nervousness is natural and it can give you that extra energy to your advantage as you perform. Even the most experienced singers are nervous for every performance.

Don't make room for negative thoughts. Fill your mind with positive and enthusiastic thoughts so that there will be no room for bad thoughts. Put all your negative thoughts into an imaginary balloon to float away into the sky.

Give yourself a peptalk! Compliment yourself on how well you sing your song and tell yourself that the audience wants to hear how great it is. Be a positive supporter for yourself.

#### Microphone Technique:

- If you are going to be using a microphone in your performance, you have to **practice** with one beforehand. You don't want to be worrying about using a microphone while performing. All you should be thinking about is singing your song.
- **Don't be afraid** of the microphone. **Get up close** to it so that your lips are almost touching the microphone and make sure **your mouth is centered** on it. Find that **"sweet spot"** as you sing into the microphone.
- When you sing louder, pull away a bit from the microphone, but not too much. If you are too far from the microphone, your singing will sound hollow.

- If you move your head or body as you sing, the microphone must move with you as you sing. You should always sing into that "sweet spot" in the microphone. This takes practice.
- If you use a microphone stand, do not lean on the stand while you are singing. Make sure the stand is tightened into place as you don't want the microphone to drop lower as you perform.
- You need to **get comfortable** with using a microphone. If you can, borrow or purchase a **microphone stand** and a **microphone** to plug into a **computer** to practice. Use **headphones** inserted into the computer if you don't want to bother your neighbors.

